

Golden Gate Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 79, No. 10 November 1997

## The Story Behind the Name

by Harry Fuller

Steller's Jay, this noisy and colorful denizen of California's forested hills and mountains, is named for one of the most intrepid and tragic of the 18th century naturalists. How he came to find this jay of western North America is a story of operatic drama.

George Wilhelm Steller (1709-1746) was born in Windsheim, Germany, and given a strong education for the time. After finishing his university work, he went to Russia where he found work as a naturalist for the Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg. It was there that he went as naturalist on Vitus Bering's last expedition into the ocean east of Siberia. Steller became the first white man known to have stepped upon the land that eventually became

known as Alaska. On that Bering expedition in 1741, Steller first saw his namesake jay on Kayak Island near present-day Valdez. Steller immediately recognized it as a North American jay because of its similarity to the Blue Jay described just a few years earlier by Mark Catesby in his *Natural History of Carolina*.

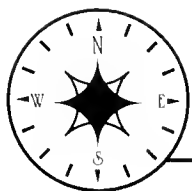
Steller spent only three days in North America, but from that visit he made the first description of plants and animals in this land that was new to Europe. In addition to the new jay, there was the Steller Sea Cow (now long extinct). Although skeletal pieces turned up for the next 100 years, no other naturalist ever saw this 4-ton mammal alive. Another species Steller found was the Spectacled Cormorant, flightless and fearless, thus doomed to extinction as well.

En route to Kamchatka, Bering's ship wrecked on a bleak island, now named for him in a sea that also bears his name. There the captain and most of the crew died. Steller was among the few who survived the Arctic winter, in spring escaping on a ship built from the wreckage of their original craft. Steller was able to salvage only a few seeds from his field specimens.

The final four years of his life, the hot-tempered Steller spent exploring and collecting plants and animals in

Continued on page 5





# Field Trips Calendar

**G**AS field trips are conducted by experienced birders who wish to share their knowledge and love of birds with others. All trips are free of charge (except for entrance fees that may be charged by regional, state, or national parks) and are open to everyone, regardless of membership in the National Audubon Society or Golden Gate chapter.

## **SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2 STRYBING ARBORETUM.**

Meet at 8 a.m. at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular 1st Sunday of the month half-day trip. The Strybing Arboretum is a delightful section of Golden Gate Park, with several micro-habitats attracting a varied array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds. Beginners and all others welcome. Leader: Allan Ridley (415) 566-3241.

## **WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12 MINI-TRIP TO AQUATIC PARK, BERKELEY,**

and other nearby areas. Meet at 9:30 a.m. in the northwest corner of Spenger's Restaurant parking lot (4th and Hearst Sts.) to carpool. We should see returning shorebirds and migratory ducks. Lunch optional. Rain cancels trip. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman.

## **SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15 COYOTE HILLS REGIONAL PARK.**

Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot on the left (beyond the fee

booth). From the East Bay take I-880 south to Rt. 84/Dumbarton Bridge exit. Turn right and continue west. Exit on Paseo Padre Pkwy. Turn right and continue north 1 mile to Patterson Ranch Road and follow signs to Coyote Hills. Bring lunch and liquids. This is a unique park with fresh water and saltpond habitat. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Peter Allen (415) 892-8063. \$ (\*)

## **SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23 LAS GALLINAS SEWER PONDS, MARIN COUNTY.**

Meet at 9:30 a.m. Take 101 north and exit at Lucas Valley Drive/Smith Ranch Road. Go east on Smith Ranch Road, turn left just before the county park, and proceed to the entrance where parking is available. We will begin this trip by birding the road before the parking lot. We should see a variety of wintering shorebirds and waterfowl on this joint GGAS and Sierra Club trip. Bring water and snacks. Trip will end by 1:00. Rain cancels. Leader: Jeffrey Black (510) 526-7068. (\*)

## **SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29 A DUCK WALK AT PALO ALTO BAYLANDS.**

We should score a dozen ducks, and perhaps - with luck - score a score of ducks. We live here year round, but many ducks are here only for the mild winter. We'll also add a dozen shorebirds and numerous songbirds, perhaps even a kite or a rail. Expect the Lesser Scaup, two teal, two goldeneye, Canvasbacks, Gadwall,

Shovelers, Canada Geese, American White Pelicans, and more. We'll bird the southern Bay shore. Heavy rain cancels. Expect cool and wet weather. Bring lunch. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the round cement duck pond, Palo Alto Baylands, east end of Embarcadero (east of P. A. Airport). Leader: Harry Fuller (415) 668-8229 (\*)

## **SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6 & 7 SACRAMENTO WILDLIFE REFUGES.**

This traditional GGAS trip will be slightly modified this year so that the Margolins can take us to the birding locations that happen to be most productive at the time of our trip. On Saturday, we will meet at 9:00 a.m. in the visitors' parking lot at the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge. To get there from I-5 take the Norman Rd. exit (just north of the Glenn Co. line) and follow signs to the refuge. We will be looking for migrating geese (4 species), a variety of ducks, raptors, and Sandhill Cranes. Allow 2 1/2 hours' driving time from the Bay Area. Steve and Renee will announce Sunday plans on Saturday. (AAA map of Sacramento Valley Region is helpful.) For accommodations, the Blue Gum Willows Motel off I-5 at Willows (916) 934-5401 is suggested, and camping is possible at the state park in Colusa. Bring lunch, scopes, and clothes appropriate for the valley in November (chilly). Heavy rain cancels trip. Leaders: Steve and Renee Margolin. (916) 342-6905. \$

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# The Coast is Clear

by John Gibbons

## **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6 BERKELEY AQUATIC PARK**

Meet at 9 a.m. for this half-day trip. Directions: heading west on Ashby, turn right on 7th Street, right again on Folger, left on Hollis, right on 67th (crossing the railroad tracks), and finally, right onto Bay St. Bay will pass over Ashby on a bridge. You will see the two smaller ponds on your left and a seabird rehabilitation center on your right. Go straight and park in the small parking lot. (Note: Long-distance landmark - radio antennae). This is a wonderful location for waterfowl in the Berkeley area - Redheads are usually found. Leader: Rusty Scalf (510) 595-8319

## **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7 STRYBING ARBORETUM**

Meet at 8 a.m. at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular 1st Sunday of the month half-day trip. The Strybing Arboretum is a delightful section of Golden Gate Park, with several micro-habitats attracting a varied array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds. Beginners and all others welcome. Leader: Allan Ridley (415) 566-3241.

## **WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10 MINI-TRIP TO LAKE MERRITT, OAKLAND**

Meet at the Rotary Science Center at 9:30 a.m. Go east on Grand Ave. to Lake Merritt. Continue to the Rotary Science Center (on the right just beyond

Many say that the meaning of life is to leave this place a little better than when you came. There were 2,129 people who put this idea into practice on San Francisco's beaches September 20, Coastal Cleanup Day. And 23 of those people proudly picked up trash on Ocean Beach for the Golden Gate Audubon Society Team.

The 218 pounds of trash that our team collected was a menagerie of things; from plenty of left-over July 4th fireworks to parts of a couch. But the two biggest culprits seemed to be grocery store plastic bags and cigarette butts of which our team collected over 1,300! We also found a decomposed sea lion carcass and 7 dead birds including a Brandt's Cormorant, an immature cormorant, a Western Gull, and a Common Murre. Although we don't know why they died, none of them were found physically entangled in garbage which is slightly encouraging, as is the fact that we only found one set of plastic six-pack rings (a leading cause of entanglement).

City-wide, 6,171 pounds of garbage and 1,765 pounds of recyclables were taken from our

beaches, while the 49,579 volunteers throughout California picked up 471,715 pounds of garbage and 48,172 pounds of recyclables. The oddest object found in the state was a gallon jar with two carved wax figures and a picture of a man - alleged to be a voodoo spell. But the full-sized refrigerator that we saw on Ocean Beach was surely a candidate!

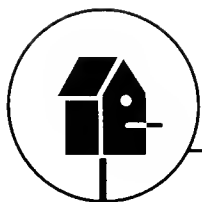
I would like to thank Brenda Goeden, San Francisco County's Coastal Cleanup Coordinator for doing such a super job of organizing everything, and a special thanks to Noel & Denise Turner, Elizabeth Faxou, Claire Chen, Claire Boddy, Jesse Connolly, Christopher Henley, Dean Williams, Michelle Spicher, David Paisley, David Marshall, Lillian Fuji, Steve Hayashi, Patti Aiello, Tod Kerr, Connie Spearing, Jim Burke, Bill Jones, Arthur Feinstein, Ruth Vose, Louise Snowden, Roland Dumontet, Latha Rajagopalan, Susan Schwendner, and every one else who helped our team that day.

And just so you can plan ahead, next year's Coastal Cleanup Day will be September 19, 1998.

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the duck pond.) This is a good opportunity to review waterfowl. Beginners welcome. Lunch optional. Rain cancels trip. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 551-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman.

Trips marked with a (S) go to parks or other sites that require an entrance fee. Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked with a (\*). See below. Problems, etc.: If you need a ride or can take a passenger, if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, if you have suggestions for trips, or IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LEADING A TRIP, call Lillian Fujii (510) 256-4167, Field Trips Committee Chair.



I've done it again. . . .regretted taking my usual 8x21 compact binoculars on a trip. Every time I leave the heavy but powerful pair at home, I kick myself. When will I learn? Frustration reared its ugly head as we slowly barged the Burgundy Canal in France. We toured cities, towns, chateaus, vineyards, and an 11th century abbey set on beautiful grounds. What were those birds flitting about! I really needed my better binos on many occasions. I tried my best to get enough clues so that I could identify those flying foreign objects, but I was not always successful. Rats! Maybe I could volunteer my services to a manufacturer? I could test binoculars for travel.... lightweight but good for birding. Pete Dunne tests binoculars for Nature Company. I'd like to do that! Of course, he has national prominence as a birder and writer. If money is no object, you have many fine brand choices; but since I have accumulated several pairs I can't justify top of the line. I think I might just try one more pair, a pair that has a wide field of view, great depth of field, bright imaging and minimal color bias-AND that weighs as little as possible. True compact types average around 7.5 oz., most run around 26 oz., and I would accept 18 oz. happily. I'll let you know. My birthday's coming up and no one knows what to get me yet!

When we travel, I am reminded that Californians are spoiled in so many ways, including weather,

diversity of landscape, and number of bird species. More than once I've noted in my column that wild birds have been hunted and eaten for centuries in Europe and many other areas of the world. As a result, wild birds in these places have become very wary of the human species, secreting themselves in thick trees and hedgerows. The Great Tit was the most obvious and easily identified songbird in France. Even raptors aren't as abundant, although I saw one large buteo-type and 3 very vocal birds that resembled falcons (I think they were Hobbys). Unlike in Africa, I saw no vultures. My best bird of the trip was a Malachite Kingfisher, summering in France (it is also found in Africa, but I had missed seeing it there).

Europeans have always been fascinated by owls, as are many peoples. On a corner of the ancient cathedral of Notre Dame in Dijon, a stone worker had carved a small owl. Passersby, mostly local people, reached out to touch it with their left hand for good luck. We added our caresses. The town had to add a clear protective lacquer on the owl because it was being worn smooth. In nearby balconies were owl figurines, and owls were on rooftops or carved as decorations on eaves. Clearly owls are important in their culture. Yet we never saw or heard a live one.

On another leg of our trip, we spent 2 days in the beautiful rolling hills of Virginia near Monticello. Once again I was

struck by the small number of birds. As we rode bicycles, I spotted a bird on a pasture fence. Happily I stopped and was treated to my first viewing of an Eastern Bluebird, which was almost as beautiful as our western version. Easterns are not the same intense cobalt blue as our Westerns, and the color of chestnut on the breast is lighter and extends to the sides of the neck. In a nearby snag was the eastern type of Red-shouldered Hawk. At first I was confused by its pale rather than red chest and pale underparts. But its red shoulders, the narrowly banded tail, and distinctive, rather erect, posture while perched gave it away. I was hoping for more bird watching but was stymied by my crummy binos. Only the American Goldfinch was easy to spot; easier than the noisy but elusive Blue Jay-which are not nearly as abundant or noisy as our two loud-mouthed jays (Scrub and Steller's). All along the way ubiquitous "little brown birds" drove me berserk.

While traveling is educational, broadening (physically as well as mentally), fascinating, and fun, I'm happy to be home. Here I can feast my eyes on my bird feeders, with or without binoculars, enjoy the antics in my birdbath, even laugh at the pesky squirrels' acrobatics while they raid the feeders. But I AM going to search for the "next" perfect travel binoculars before our next trip, wherever our destination may be. It's in writing now, so I'm committed.



# The Story Behind the Name

## Needed:

Boat and birder for the Oakland Christmas Bird Count December 21 "South Sea Area." This area covers San Francisco Bay south of the Bay Bridge, between Treasure Island and Oakland Airport. Call (510) 494-1098 if you have a boat, want to participate, or know some one who may be interested.

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Siberia. He ran afoul of the czarist bureaucracy when he angrily released 17 Siberian natives he thought had been unfairly arrested. For this he was eventually arrested, imprisoned, tried, and finally released. But paperwork moved slowly. As Steller himself headed back toward Saint Petersburg to write and publish his findings, he was

again arrested on the original charges because local officials had not yet gotten word that he was no longer wanted and had been released. By the time he was released a second time, his health was broken and he became fatally ill as he tried to reach Saint Petersburg. He was only 37 years old.

Few of the plants and animals he collected in Siberia actually got back to Saint Petersburg. Steller himself never had the chance to publish a single paper. His journals did reach the Academy and were published after his death. It was on the strength of his detailed and painstakingly accurate journals that the Steller's Jay was first described by English naturalist John Latham, in 1781. By that time, the British had an actual bird skin taken from Vancouver Island by Cook's expedition. Also a sea-eagle and eider were named for Steller, who discovered them in the north Pacific.

Steller almost disappeared from history until Leonhard Stejneger, a Norwegian-American naturalist, went to Alaska in the late 19th century in search of a possible surviving Steller Sea Cow. He did not find the mammal, but he did find a life-long fascination with Steller and over the next five decades retraced Steller's steps, explored his life, discovered his long-lost papers in Saint Petersburg, and finally published the only biography of Steller in 1936.

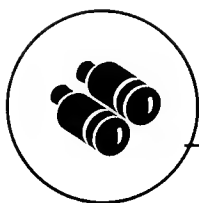
## Christmas Bird Counts

**Oakland: Sunday, December 21**

**San Francisco: Tuesday, December 30**

One of the Bay Area's special holiday events is coming - the annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). We join others throughout the world in this great conservation tradition. It began in 1900 to protest an old hunt that killed as many animals as possible. These live counts number over 1,600. Volunteers record as many species as possible in 24 hours within a 15-wide circle. We break into teams led by local experts to search fields, shorelines, suburbs and mountain trails for wintering birds. Who will tell the funniest CBC story, see the best bird, spot a new species for the area? All is shared at an informal dinner (good, wholesome and cheap) immediately following the count. Some groups have been covering the same areas for so long it is as much a social event as a bird count. However, the count is serious too. Being accurate and comprehensive are important because the information we collect is sent to the National Audubon Society, and made available to researchers studying bird distribution and population trends.

GGAS sponsors 2 counts, one in Oakland on Sunday, December 21, and one in San Francisco on Tuesday, December 30. Birders of all skill levels are invited to participate, either by joining a team in the field or by watching a feeder at home. Notices, with sign-up details, will be mailed in early November to all of whom have participated in the past three years. Anyone else wanting to join in should call the GGAS office (510-843-2222) to be put on the mailing list. We look forward to counting with you!



July 26 to September 21

The world of the birder would not be the same without the changing panorama afforded by the seasons. Anticipation of the return of the familiar is coupled with possibilities for the new or exotic visitor. For me, the joy of this seasonal change occurred right on schedule, when I awoke to the sliding "teakettle" notes of Golden-crowned Sparrows on the first day of autumn and enjoyed an unusual visit from a pair of Bewick's Wrens fussing about in the hedge outside my window in Berkeley. This report covers an extended period due to the changeover in the post of *Observation's* Editor. A big thank-you to Hugh Cotter for his thorough and interesting columns and for helping to get me started: I will try to follow his excellent example.

## Loons to Albatross

An unseasonable Red-throated Loon was seen near Brooks Island in Richmond, CC, on Aug. 3 (SG). Red-necked Grebes were found at Pt. Reyes (MRN) Aug. 29-Sept. 8 (RS). Black-footed Albatross were reported in good numbers, with the highest count of 200 sighted on the Aug. 1 Cordell Banks Pelagic Trip with comparatively few found by late August and Sept (KH); only 3 Laysan Albatross were seen during all the Cordell Banks trips during the period (DS, KH). Northern Fulmars were seen on the Aug. 15 and 31 Cordell Banks trips (DN, RS) and on Sept. 14 in waters off the Sonoma Coast (DN). A **Dark-rumped Petrel** was well-observed on the Cordell Bank trip Aug. 1 (KH). A *Pterodroma* sp., identified as a **Stejneger's Petrel**, was

observed on the Farallones, SF, Sept. 19, although this identification remains uncertain (KH). High count for Ashy Storm Petrels was 1,750 from the Sonoma coastal waters on Sept. 14 (DN). A **Mottled Petrel** found dead during a stormy period in Nov. 1996 was received this August by the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History and is only the second MTY County record. Interestingly, the first report of a Flesh-footed Shearwater came on the very same date as last year (Sept. 1), this time from Gregorio

State Beach, SM (JMo). In mid-Sept., there were 3 more sightings of this species, 1 each from Monterey Bay, the Farallones, and the waters off the Sonoma Coast. There were also scattered reports of **Manx Shearwaters**, 1 in August and 5 in September. The largest group of Black-vented Shearwaters numbered 980 near San Gregorio St. Beach, SM, Aug. 21 (RT).

A **Red-billed Tropicbird** was observed in SM County waters 37 mi. SW of Pt. Reyes on Sept. 10 (SR), and a **Masked Booby** flew by a boat 23 mi W of Pt. Pinos, MTY, Aug. 29 (fide DLSh). The occurrence of these 2 species in our area may be related to the warm-water incursion due to the El Nino event. There was a **Magnificent Frigatebird** at Pt. Reyes, MRN, July 27 (KQ fide DS, MB, LL, GG), and 2 were sighted off Manressa St. Beach, SCL, July 29 (per MPRBA). A Little Blue Heron lingered near the Hog Island Oyster Co. in Marshall, MRN, from July 27 to Sept. 8 (LL, TO, MF) and another was seen near Crittenden Marsh, SCL, July 28-Aug. 3 (MR, PM). At least 400 White-faced Ibis were counted in Sacramento Co. on Sept 16 (SA). Unusual raptor sightings included an early Broad-winged Hawk in Marin Co. on Sept. 3 (DDS) (the average date for this species is Oct. 3 as per Small, 1994) and another in Marin on Sept. 20 (RH). A Prairie Falcon, uncommon near the coast, was seen at the Moon Glow Dairy, MTY, Sept. 1 (per MPRBA).

There were early reports of both Pacific and American Golden Plovers in late July and August and a single

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## Gifts and Bequests

### Audubon Adventures:

U.C Faculty Birding Section

### Birdathon:

Mark Eaton

### Bird Box:

Courtenay Peddle

The Society welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor of or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor or, if unspecified, at the discretion of the GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use of general GGAS activities or for special programs of the Society. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in *The Gull*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Secretary.

# Warbler sightings

## Tennessee Warbler

Sept. 12 Princeton, SM RT  
Sept. 20 Phipps Ranch, SM RT

## Nashville Warbler

Sept. 6 GG Park Arboretum, SF KH

## Virginia's Warbler

Aug. 20 near Lee Vining, MNO PM  
Aug. 31 AMSP, MTY JB  
Sept. 13 San Gregorio Creek, SM RT

## Lucy's Warbler

Aug. 18-21 SON CC, MP, NW  
Sept. 7 Half Moon Bay, SM RT  
Aug. 31 Bodega Bay, SON RR

## Northern Parula

Aug. 31 AMSP, MTY JB  
& Sept 7-8 (banded bird)  
Sept. 3 Pt. Reyes, MRN MP  
Sept. 4 L. Merced, SF DM  
Sept. 6-10 L. Merced, SF JG,DM,CLo,SS,ME  
Sept. 20 Bolinas, MRN TG  
Sept. 20 L. Merced, SF JC

## Chestnut-sided Warbler

Sept. 13 San Bruno Co.Park, SM MMc  
Sept. 13-16 Bodega Bay, SON  
DN, RR fide DN, DS

## Magnolia Warbler

Sept. 3 Pt. Reyes Lighthouse, MRN BB  
Sept.18-19 Carmel R. Mouth, MTY  
per MPRBA  
Sept. 20 Fish Docks, MRN per RS fide JD

## Blackburnian Warbler

Sept. 19 San Pedro Creek, SM RT

## Prairie Warbler

Aug. 28 Farallones KH  
Sept. 1-2 Drakes Beach, MRN TE, ES  
Sept. 3 Pt. Reyes Lighthouse, MRN BB  
Sept. 7 Gazos Creek, SM DW  
Sept. 8 MRN RS

## Palm Warbler

Sept. 20 Glass Beach, MEN DT

## Bay-breasted Warbler

July 27 Farallones KH

## Black & White Warbler

Sept. 3 MRN MP  
Sept. 10, 12 Tilden Park, CC SG,CK  
Sept. 16 Stowe L., GG Park, SF CL  
Sept. 19 Moss Beach, SM AE

## American Redstart

July 27 Phipps Ranch, SM BM  
1 male, nest now inactive due to cowbird parasitism  
July 27 MRN RS  
August 2 SM RT  
August 13-Sept. 1 MTY per MPRBA  
August 7-16 SCL SR, MM  
August 31 AMSP, MTY JB  
Sept. 14 SCL AJ  
Sept.6-8 L. Merced, SF JG

## Ovenbird

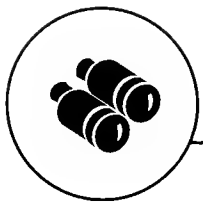
Sept. 4 AMSP, MTY per MPRBA

## Canada Warbler

Sept. 7-8 AMSP, MTY per MPRBA

## Northern Waterthrush

Aug. 15 Bodega Bay, DH  
Aug. 28 Farallones KH  
Sept. 7 (3) Carmel R. mouth, MTY  
per MPRBA  
Sept. 7 L. Merced, SF DM  
Sept. 7 Venice St.Beach, SM RT  
Sept. 8 Soquel Creek, MTY per MPRBA  
Sept. 9 Bodega Dunes, SON DN  
Sept. 11-12 Jewel L.,Tilden Park, BB, SG  
Sept. 17 Bodega Bay, SON DS  
Sept. 18 L. El Estero, MTY per MPRBA  
Sept.8,18-21 Carmel R. Mouth, MTY  
per MPRBA, BR  
Sept. 20 Farallones KH



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Mountain Plover, a species considered a "very rare fall transient in the dry valleys east of the Sierra" (Small, 1994), was found at Mono Lake (MNO) Aug. 22 (PM). The most unusual *Calidris* sp. reports were the continued presence (see Sept. *Gull*) of a **Curlew Sandpiper** Jul. 28-30 near Stevens Creek and Crittenden Marsh, SCL (MR), which apparently reappeared in mostly basic plumage on Aug. 12 (SR) and of a **White-rumped Sandpiper** at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station, SCL Sept. 3-5 (NL, MR, AJ, LC, MF, JM). A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was on the ocean side of L. Talawa, DNC, Sept. 12 (TE). Interesting were two Wandering Tattlers near Brooks Is, CC, Aug. 3 (SG). The first 2 weeks of September brought reports of Ruffs from MEN, MTY, and SCL counties. On Aug 31, there was a **Bar-tailed Godwit** at San Gregorio State Beach, SM (JMo,DSi) and 3, an incredible number, were found at Ocean Ranch Estuary, HUM, Sept. 12 (TE). Outstanding is a report from Tunitas Creek, SM, of a White-rumped, or "Variegatus" Whimbrel which may be the 4th California record of this Siberian race of the Whimbrel, (*Numenius phaeopus*) (RT). This race may later achieve full species status. The high count for Red-necked Phalaropes was 4000 on Sept. 14, SCL (RT).

South Polar Skuas and all 3 jaegers were seen on several pelagic trips to the Cordell Banks, Monterey Bay, and offshore from the SM coast. Inland Parasitic Jaegers were spotted at the Berkeley Marina, ALA, Aug. 24 (JG), at Mono Lake, MNO, Aug 23 (PM), and at the lagoon at the Salinas R. mouth, MTY, Sept. 14 (per MPRBA). One each

The Golden Gate Audubon Society would like to thank Hugh Cotter for the incredible amount of time and effort he has spent in bringing us the *Observations* column. As you can imagine, it is not an easy task, yet Hugh has delivered the column each month despite his many other responsibilities. Luckily, some of those responsibilities are with GGAS as well, so although Hugh will no longer be doing the column, he is still very busy supporting GGAS.

We would also like to thank Collin Murphy for picking up the reigns and welcome her to the *Gull*! She has chosen to fill an extremely important niche in the newsletter, and was able to tackle a rather jam-packed *Observations* her first time around.

Thanks to both of you!

Laughing and Franklin's gulls were reported from San Mateo (GS fide RT) and San Joaquin Counties (DY). Good numbers of Sabine's Gulls were found on the Cordell Banks trips, as were Arctic Terns and Elegant Terns, which had counts of around 200 birds in both San Mateo and San Francisco counties. The northward trend for Black Skimmers continues, with reports from MRN, MTY, SON, and SM counties, with a group of **14** including 2 juveniles at Charleston Slough, SCL, on Sept. 14 (PM). Craveri's and Xantus' murrelets in unusual abundance, another possible El Nino effect, were reported from pelagic trips and Marbled Murrelets were seen in several counties (SM, SON, CC, MEN). Cordell Banks trips also reported large numbers of Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets in Aug. and Sept. as well as **Parakeet Auklets**, 2 of which were described on the Aug. 26 Cordell Banks trip (DN) and another 21 mi SW of Pt. Reyes, MRN, on Sept. 12 (SR). These represent early sightings for this rare visitor.

## Doves to Vireos

A White-winged Dove flew near the Big Sur R. mouth, MTY, Sept. 4 (per MPRBA). On Aug. 5, there was a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, extremely rare along the central coast at this date, at the Navarro R., MEN, Aug. 5 (RI). A vagrant **Chimney Swift** was identified at Alviso, SCL, Sept. 19 (SR). Black-chinned Hummingbirds were rare transients seen on Bethel Island, CC, Aug. 3 (SG). A Red-breasted Sapsucker, unusual on the coast in August, was seen at Gazos Creek, SM, Aug. 21 (RT). There were 7 reports of Eastern Kingbirds from Aug. 27-Sept. 20 (MRN, MTY, MOD, CC, SM counties). Of special note were the two of this species in Modoc county on Sept. 9 (DS), since they are rarely reported in the eastern deserts during the fall migration (Small, 1994). Other outstanding flycatchers were a **Yellow-Bellied Flycatcher** on the Farallones Sept. 10 (PP fide JB), one of only a few N. California records, a **Least Flycatcher** at Bodega Bay, SON, possibly a first county record, on Sept 9 (DN) and the Farallones Sept. 20 (KH). A Gray Flycatcher was

## Birding with Children

Join Dave Soares for a leisurely walk around Jewel Lake in Tilden Park with stops for nature activities and games. We will meet at the entrance to Tilden Park Nature Study Area on Sunday, November 16 at 9:00 a.m. Jewel Lake is host to many Mallard families and we may see a heron and some turtles sunning themselves. We look forward to seeing you. Rain cancels the trip. For more information or directions, please contact Louise Harm at (510) 845-2482.

Join Stephanie Quick for another bird trip geared specifically for families with children. This trip will take place at Lake Merritt on Sunday, November 23 at 10:00 a.m. Meet in front of the nature center next to the bird sanctuary. Lake Merritt provides a wonderful location to introduce young birders to local waterfowl, while giving the adults a chance to talk with Stephanie about the huge diversity of birds the area supports. Stephanie will keep the pace slow, for smaller legs, and will spend time pointing out basic bird behavior to the children. Adults will have plenty of time for questions. Families with children of any age should feel free to attend. For further information or directions, contact Louise Harm at (510) 845-2482.

seen north of Marin): 1 on the Farallones Sept. 19 (KH) and 1 the next day in Mendocino on Sept. 20 (JW). Another rarity, a hatching-year Scott's Oriole, was reported at Bodega Bay (SON) on Aug. 19 (DN). A late occurrence was the report of 6 Cassin's Finches in Carmel Valley, MTY, Aug. 13 (per MPRBA).

The monthly *Observation* column is generated from reports made to the Northern California Bird Box and Monterey Peninsula Rare Bird Alert (MPRBA) or to the author. Some sightings are unconfirmed and numbers of birds are often best regarded as estimates or "best guesses". In general, birds in boldface are very rare in our region, geographically or seasonally. Many of these are currently reviewed by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC). Observers are encouraged to provide written and/or photographic documentation to the CBRC, c/o Michael Patten, P.O. Box 51959, Riverside, CA 92517-2959 for any species currently on the review list. A list of review species can also be obtained from the CBRC secretary at the address above.

This data is made possible by all the observers who contributed their reports to the Northern California Bird Box and Monterey Peninsula Rare Bird Alert (MPRBA).

If anybody has photos of birds reported in this column and would be interested in letting us post them on our web site we would be very appreciative. Please feel free to contact me to discuss.

### Abbreviations for Observers:

SA, Steve Abbott; JB, Jim Booker; BB, Bob Brandriff; JB, Joelle Buffa; MB, Mark Butler; RC, Rich Cimino; JC, Josiah Clark; LC, Luke Cole; CC, Chris Corben; DDS, Dave DeSante; JD, Jack Dincen; TE, Todd Easterla; ME, Mark Eaton; AE, Al Eisner; ME, Mike Feighner; TG, Tom Gardali; GG, Gene Gerlach; SG, Steve Glover; JG, James Good; KH, Keith Hansen; SH, Scott Hein; DH, David Hoffman; RH, Rich Hoyer; RI, Richard Irvine; AJ, Al Jaramillo; CK, Chris Koundakjian; NL, Nick Lethaby; LL, Leslie Lieurance; CL, Cindy Lieurance; CLo, Calvin Lou; MM, Mike Mammoser; JM, Jennifer Matkin; PM, Peter Metropulos; MMc, Mac McCormick; BM, Bert McKee; JMo, Joe Morlan; DM, Dan Murphy; DN, Dan Nelson; DvN, Dave Nelson; TO, Trent Orr; MP, Mike Parmeter; PP, Peter Pyle; KQ, Karen Quigley; BR, Bob Reiling; MR, Mike Rogers; SR, Steve Rottenborn; RR, Ruth Rudecill; SS, Sonia Santana; DS, Doug Shaw; DSi, Dan Singer; DLSH, Debra Love Shearwater; RS, Rich Stallcup; ES, Emily Strauss; RT, Ron Thorn; DT, Dorothy Tobkin; DW, Dave Weber; JW, Jerry White; NW, Ned Winn; DY, David Yee.

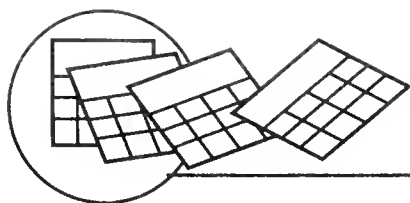
### Abbreviations for Counties and Others

ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa; DNC, Del Norte; HUM, Humboldt; MRN, Marin; MEN, Mendocino; MNO, Mono; MTY, Monterey; SF, San Francisco; SM, San Mateo; SCL, Santa Clara; SON, Sonoma; AMS, Andrew Molera State Park; GG, Golden Gate Park; MPRBA, Monterey Peninsula Rare Bird Alert.

also observed for 3 minutes at Twin Peaks (SF) Sept. 1 (JM) and on the Farallones Sept 14 (KH). Red-eyed Vireos are rare but regular fall transients. One was banded at Big Sur, MTY, July 29 (per MPRBA), another was seen in Humboldt Co. on Sept. 8 (DS), and there were 3 reports Sept. 11-16 from Jewel L., Tilden Park, CC (BB). A rare Plumbeous Vireo, a new split from the Solitary Vireo, was seen in Humboldt Co Sept. 8 (DS).

## Tanagers to Finches

Summer Tanagers, a rare transient along the central coast, were reported twice, one female from Pt. Reyes, MRN, Aug. 30 (DS) and another individual at Mono L. State Park, MNO, on Sept. 7 (RC). Three reports of Blue Grosbeaks came from Contra Costa, Sonoma and Monterey Counties in August and Sept (SG, DE fide DN, per MPRBA). There were 4 reports of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks from Monterey (per MPRBA), Contra Costa (SH), and San Mateo counties (JMo) during the week of Sept. 14-20. An Indigo Bunting, a rare fall migrant, was seen in Yolo Co. on Aug. 16 and 18 (MF). A single Lark Bunting was found in Marin on Sept. 8 (RS), and there were 4 sightings of Clay-colored Sparrows: 1 each at Martinez (CC) Sept. 8 (DW), San Gregorio Creek, SM, Sept. 14 (RT), the Farallones Sept. 20 (KH), and Pacifica, SM, Sept. 20 (JMo). A Vesper Sparrow was identified at the Carmel R. mouth, MTY, Sept. 20 (per MPRBA). Two Bobolinks were found, 1 at the Farallones Aug. 17 (PP fide KH), and another at the Guadalupe R., SCL, Sept. 1 (MM). Symbolizing fall colors were the reports of Orchard Orioles, (rarely



# September Meeting

## Protecting What We Have & Restoring What We've Lost

**W**hile the Klamath Basin continues to support the largest wintering Bald Eagle population in the lower 48 states and is a major stop-over for most of the waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway, in this century, 80% of the area's wetlands (and associated fish and wildlife resources) have been lost. The recent years of drought coupled with ever increased agricultural pressures on the wildlife

Thursday, November 20

7:30 p.m.

Northbrae Community Church

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bounty has made protection of the Klamath Basin's natural resources a priority for the Oregon Natural Resources Council (ONRC).

The council's Klamath Basin Program Leader, Wendell Wood, will be conducting a slide presentation and talk at our next meeting, on wildlife and issues surrounding northern California and southern Oregon's Klamath Basin, including the need to restore thousands of acres of natural marshes. Wendell has assembled a series of exceptionally scenic slides of the basin, and will also be discussing recommended locations for people wishing to visit the area.



PHOTO BY JOHN GIBBONS

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically enrolled in the local chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society. Chapter benefits include receipt of *The Gull*, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Call the office if you have any questions.

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